



Department of Public Works

Ghassan Korban, P.E.
Commissioner of Public Works

Preston D. Cole
Director of Operations

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Media Contact: Sandy Rusch Walton

414.286.3261 (o)

414.708.2386 (c)

slrusch@milwaukee.gov

Improper Hazardous Chemical Disposal Puts Recycling Facility and Sanitation Workers at Risk

Old chemicals, gasoline, and propane cylinders should not be put in garbage or recycling carts

With a recent incident involving a garbage truck on the City of Milwaukee's west side and a separate incident of a small fire at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works (DPW) reminds residents to not dispose of hazardous waste in your garbage or recyclable carts.

Chemicals, gasoline, and propane cylinders pose a very serious health risk to collection crews and MRF staff members. In an incident earlier in May, muriatic acid placed in a resident's garbage cart created a gas, and two DPW Sanitation drivers were taken to the hospital for inhaling the fumes and were later cleared to return home. The Milwaukee Fire Department's Hazmat team responded and cleaned up the remaining chemicals and disposed of them safely. Chemicals such as muriatic acid, often used as a concrete cleaner or drain cleaner, are considered hazardous waste and must be taken to one of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's permanent or mobile collection sites. One of MMSD's three permanent sites is at the City of Milwaukee's Self Help Center at 3879 W Lincoln Ave. and is open Thursday – Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Flammable liquids and propane cylinders pose an additional threat to workers' safety if they are placed in recycling carts and delivered to the MRF. They are an explosion and fire hazard because recyclables are compressed under hundreds of pounds of pressure to form large bales for shipment. Flammable liquids, like gasoline, must be taken to a Hazardous Waste site. Propane cylinders are not accepted at Hazardous Waste sites. Instead, check the tag on the cylinder to identify the manufacturer and contact them for disposal options. Alternatively, some local scrap metal collectors or home improvement stores will accept empty propane cylinders for recycling.

"It is essential that residents properly dispose of old propane tanks so they don't hurt anyone, including your family members and our Sanitation workers," said DPW Commissioner Ghassan Korban. "These propane containers cannot be thrown in garbage or recycling carts – they must be handled carefully and correctly when at the end of their useful lives."

Residents can look up a variety of items on DPW's new website to find out about safe disposal options. The website is located at MilwaukeeRecycles.com. Residents can also learn more about MMSD's Hazardous Waste Collection Program at MMSD.com.

Be safe this summer and always keep your hazardous waste and propane cylinders and tanks out of your garbage and recycling carts. Dispose of them properly and safely – our Sanitation and MRF crew members thank you!

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Frank P. Zeidler Municipal Building, 841 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202
Administration Room 501 (414) 286-3703 ♦ Fax (414) 286-3953 ♦ TDD (414) 286-2025
Contract Administration, Room 506 (414) 286-3314 Fax (414) 286-8110 ♦ www.city.milwaukee.gov/mpw

